Defining African Culture
Introduction

• Just like pretty much everywhere else in the world the culture of Africa is a mix of local or foreign influences
  – Heavy influence from Asia and Europe Historically
The Egyptians

- One of the oldest continuous civilizations in the world
  - Evidence of Agriculture about 7000 years ago
- Interaction and conflict with a number of other powers throughout history
  - Mesopotamians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Ottomans, and eventually Europeans
The Spread of Islam

• Beginning in the 7th Century Muslims began pushing into Egypt and across North Africa
  – Economically beneficial for North Africans to convert to Islam and learn Arabic
    • More likely to get favorable deals with wealthy Arab merchants
    • Did not pay *Jizya* (Tax on non-Muslims)
Trade and the Spread of Culture

• Trans-Saharan Trade
  – Brought goods from Middle East and Europe to south, brought slaves and gold north from Northern and Western Africa.

• Indian Ocean Trade
  – Connected Eastern Africa to Middle East, India, and China through Indian Ocean trade routes

• Encouraged the spread of Islamic and Arabic
Influence on Languages of Africa

**Language Families and Languages of Africa**

- **Niger-Congo-Kordofanian**
  - Bantu: Ganda, Kongo, Luba, Rwanda, Shona, Swahili, Tswana, Xhosa, Zulu
  - Non-Bantu: Fulani, Ibo, Mandingo, Mende, Mossi, Twi, Wolof, Yoruba

- **Nilo-Saharan**
  - Kanuri, Masai, Nandi, Nubian, Nuer, and others

- **Hamito-Semitic (Afro-Asiatic)**
  - Amharic, Arabic, Hausa, Oromo (Galla), Somali, Tamazight, and others

- **Khoisan**
  - !Khung, Kxoe, Nama, and others

- **Austronesian (Malay-Polynesian)**
  - Malagasy

- **Indo-European**
  - Afrikaans, English, and others

The language families and languages shown are not the only ones in a particular area and are not confined to that area.
The Religious Split in Africa

- Christianity and Islam are still the two major religions on the continent
  - Some traditional religions still exist
- Religious division still source of many conflicts on the continent

*Source: censuses, demographic and health surveys, and the World Religion Database, Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, April 2010*
Pre-European Empires

- Africa was a patchwork of Empires with their own unique customs and traditions
  - Lots of evidence of rich cultures and a lot of interaction between cultures
  - Mostly oral traditions, a lot was wiped out during European colonization
European Colonization

- In the 19th century Africa was divided among powerful European countries to begin the process of Imperialism
  - Heavy influence by Europeans beforehand
- Europeans very influential in molding of modern African culture
  - Most sub-Saharan countries have a European language as at least one of their official languages
Modern Africa

• Technology is still shaping the cultural landscape of Africa
  – Mostly as interconnected as the rest of the world
  – Technological growth will further connect Africa